

10 great places to . . .

With travel purchases fueling on-line sales expected to reach \$7 billion this year, it's no surprise that a lot of globe-trotting Santas will be shopping in cyberspace the next few weeks. But if your gift budget won't accommodate a Caribbean cruise or trans-Atlantic ticket, don't fret: We asked electronic commerce expert **Frank Fiore** of The Mining Co., a network of hand-picked sites (theminingco.com), to point his browser toward Web resources that emphasize travel books, clothing and gear.

While narrow bandwidth and slow servers can make shopping by computer as frustrating as circling a mall parking lot for a spot, some on-line merchants throw in such sweeteners as free shipping or Internet-only discounts. Here's a guide to shopping on the Web:

AardvarkPet www.aardvarkpet.com

If your shopping list includes vacationers who wouldn't dream of leaving their pets behind, check out AardvarkPet's travel items, many of which are discounted 25% through December. Not enthralled by the auto kennel (\$40.99)? There's always a pair of doggie hiking boots (\$28). Available in five sizes, they're lined with polar fleece and made of ballistic nylon — perfect for protecting delicate paws on those treacherous mountain trails.

Amazon.com www.amazon.com

This Internet retailing pioneer lets you choose books by destination, travel series or travel niche,

from honeymoons to senior travel (just click "browse: travel" on Amazon's home page). They'll even wrap your purchase in world-map gift paper for an extra \$2 per order.

Bentley's Luggage & Gifts www.bentleys.com

One of the USA's largest chain of luggage and gift stores, Bentley's lures on-line shoppers with "holiday specials" such as a Travelpro CrewSeries Plus Rollaboard for \$154.99 (\$105 less than the suggested retail price). The site's travel tips include a timely chart of airline carry-on luggage policies — sober reading if you're the type who favors overstuffed garment bags.

Christine Columbus www.christinecolumbus.com

"Christopher Columbus may have discovered the New World, but it was Christine who packed his bags," declares this lively, information-packed site of clothing and gear aimed at female travelers. The company will e-mail your gift suggestions — say, a palm-size hair dryer for \$19.95 — to friends and family. Through Dec. 15, on-line orders of \$100 or more earn a free travel umbrella (a \$22 value).

iQVC www.qvc.com

While QVC is best known for its on-camera pitches, "you don't have to wait in front of your TV to find these travel bargains." Just type

"travel" in the product search window, and up comes an extensive list of items aimed at enhancing a business trip or vacation.

Le Travel Store www.lettravelstore.com

Can't make it to this longtime retailer's real-life store in San Diego?

The on-line version doesn't offer any special deals, but its virtual showroom sells every product made by Eagle Creek, a leading manufac-

tested travel tips and well-chosen links to other travel sites.

By Laura Bly

THIS WAY

WHERE TO GO,
WHAT TO DO

turer of travel gear, plus a full selection of books from Lonely Planet, Rough Guides and Rick Steves (author of *Europe Through the Back Door*).

Preview Travel

www.previewtravel.com/Store

One of the Internet's most popular travel agencies features items from REI, Samsonite and TravelSmith, with weekly, Web-only incentives or discounts. "You can get a packing list of travel gear organized by the kind of trip you're taking, from an African safari to a business trip, then buy what you need from the on-line store," Fiore says. "Pretty smart."

Rand McNally Travel Store

www.randmcnallystore.com

You'll find atlases, mapping software and globes at this well-designed site, along with books, puzzles and games designed to stave off those plaintive "Are we there yet?" queries from the back seat. Rand McNally will wrap your gifts free, and a "personal shopper" link offers advice for the indecisive.

Road Warrior Outpost

warrior.com

"They don't call them warriors for nothing. There are dangers aplenty when traveling with your laptop computer," Fiore says. "But at this site, you can connect it, protect it, even upgrade it," with everything from modem adapters (\$14.95) to plug-and-play notebook hard drives (\$200-\$1,200).

Walkabout Travel Gear

www.walkabouttravel.com

Now here's a refreshing concept: an Internet travel site that shuns high-tech features, figuring that customers want "straightforward information without whistles and bells." The on-line catalog features gear for active, independent travelers (such as waterproof fannypacks for \$22), bulletin boards, field-

. . . buy travel gifts on line

By Sam Ward, USA TODAY